

ABSTRACT

The relationship between stressful life events and physical pain in young adults (Age 20 - 34).

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Pain (including headache, neckache, backache, chest pain, abdominal pain or pain in the limbs) that is not managed properly in young adults results in decreased productivity and poor work attendance. Multiple diagnostic and therapeutic interventions can cost the health care system excessively and can lead to iatrogenic disease. Negative reactions in caregivers can ensue and overall, individuals can be left with a sense of hopelessness for recovery. Mental and physical health are inextricably linked. Neglect of the psychosocial components in the search for the etiology and management of physical pain at the primary level may be reducing the opportunity for speedy recovery. This study was done to determine the relationship between recent and remote stressful life events and the development of pain.

A case-control study was conducted among adults age 20 - 34 years attending one private, one government and one university clinic in Kingston, Jamaica. 46 cases

with pain and 70 controls who were pain-free were chosen. The findings suggest no relation between the actual number of life events and pain but there is a clear association between the perception of a negative impact of a series of life changes on the development of physical pain. The findings also show that of overriding significance in the development of pain is the perceived lack of social support available to the patient. A significant relationship was also found between the perception of a tumultuous childhood and pain although no relationship was found between specific remote childhood stressors and pain.

This study highlights the need for greater attention to the integration of mental health and primary care beginning with the training of health workers and education at policy level, service delivery level and of the public.
